

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY

MAX S. ALEXANDER,

Plaintiff,

v.

CAMDEN COUNTY DEPARTMENT
OF CORRECTIONS and CAMDEN
COUNTY BOARD OF FREEHOLDERS,

Defendants.

HONORABLE JEROME B. SIMANDLE

Civil Action
No. 16-cv-06993(JBS-AMD)

OPINION

APPEARANCES

Max S. Alexander, Plaintiff Pro Se
301 Market Street, #210
Camden, NJ 08102

SIMANDLE, Chief District Judge:

I. INTRODUCTION

Plaintiff Max S. Alexander seeks to bring a civil rights complaint pursuant to 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against the Camden County Department of Corrections ("CCDOC") and the Camden County Board of Freeholders ("BOF") for allegedly unconstitutional conditions of confinement. Complaint, Docket Entry 1.

Section 1915(e)(2) requires a court to review complaints prior to service in cases in which a plaintiff is proceeding *in forma pauperis*. The Court must sua sponte dismiss any claim that is frivolous, is malicious, fails to state a claim upon which relief may be granted, or seeks monetary relief from a defendant who is immune from such relief. This action is subject to sua

sponte screening for dismissal under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B) because Plaintiff is proceeding *in forma pauperis*.

For the reasons set forth below, the Court will dismiss the Complaint with prejudice for failure to state a claim. 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(b)(ii).

II. BACKGROUND

With respect to alleged facts giving rise to his claims, Plaintiff states: "Camden County Department of Corrections forced me to live in an overcrowded jail cell while I was a pre-trial detainee from April 2007 to February 2009. During every hour of every day of that time for close to two years, I had to live and sleep on the floor. The cell had a 2-person capacity and a toilet. CCDOC consistently housed 4 to 5 people in my cell." Complaint § III(C).

Plaintiff states that these alleged events occurred: "April 2007 through February 2009, all day, every day." *Id.* § III(B).

Plaintiff contends that "[a]s a result of relentlessly cruel and dehumanizing restriction and confinement, I contracted MRSA and have heart disease, chronic back and joint pain, sleep apnea, high blood pressure and mental depression." *Id.* § IV.

Plaintiff seeks \$25 million in relief.

III. STANDARD OF REVIEW

To survive *sua sponte* screening under 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2) for failure to state a claim, a complaint must allege

"sufficient factual matter" to show that the claim is facially plausible. *Fowler v. UPMS Shadyside*, 578 F.3d 203, 210 (3d Cir. 2009) (citation omitted). "A claim has facial plausibility when the plaintiff pleads factual content that allows the court to draw the reasonable inference that the defendant is liable for the misconduct alleged." *Fair Wind Sailing, Inc. v. Dempster*, 764 F.3d 303, 308 n.3 (3d Cir. 2014). "[A] pleading that offers 'labels or conclusions' or 'a formulaic recitation of the elements of a cause of action will not do.'" *Ashcroft v. Iqbal*, 556 U.S. 662, 678 (2009) (quoting *Bell Atlantic Corp. v. Twombly*, 550 U.S. 544, 555 (2007)).

IV. DISCUSSION

Plaintiff asserts claims against the CCDOC and BOF for allegedly unconstitutional conditions of confinement. Plaintiff's claims must be dismissed with prejudice.

First, the CCDOC and BOF are not separate legal entities from Camden County and are therefore not independently subject to suit. See *Bermudez v. Essex Cty. D.O.C.*, No. 12-6035, 2013 WL 1405263, at *5 (D.N.J. Apr. 4, 2013) (citing cases). Plaintiff has not pled sufficient facts to impose liability on Camden County. "There is no respondeat superior theory of municipal liability, so a city may not be held vicariously liable under § 1983 for the actions of its agents. Rather, a municipality may be held liable only if its policy or custom is the 'moving

force' behind a constitutional violation." *Sanford v. Stiles*, 456 F.3d 298, 314 (3d Cir. 2006) (citing *Monell v. N.Y.C. Dep't of Social Services*, 436 U.S. 658, 691 (1978)). See also *Collins v. City of Harker Heights*, 503 U.S. 115, 122 (1992) ("The city is not vicariously liable under § 1983 for the constitutional torts of its agents: It is only liable when it can be fairly said that the city itself is the wrongdoer."). A plaintiff must plead facts showing that the relevant Camden County policy-makers are "responsible for either the affirmative proclamation of a policy or acquiescence in a well-settled custom." *Bielewicz v. Dubinon*, 915 F.2d 845, 850 (3d Cir. 1990).¹

Second, "plaintiffs who file complaints subject to dismissal should receive leave to amend unless amendment would be inequitable under [§ 1915] or futile." *Grayson v. Mayview State Hosp.*, 293 F.3d 103, 114 (3d Cir. 2002). This Court denies leave to amend at this time as Plaintiff's Complaint is barred by the statute of limitations, which is governed by New Jersey's

¹ "Policy is made when a decisionmaker possess[ing] final authority to establish municipal policy with respect to the action issues an official proclamation, policy, or edict. Government custom can be demonstrated by showing that a given course of conduct, although not specifically endorsed or authorized by law, is so well-settled and permanent as virtually to constitute law." *Kirkland v. DiLeo*, 581 F. App'x 111, 118 (3d Cir. 2014) (internal quotation marks and citations omitted) (alteration in original).

two-year limitations period for personal injury.² See *Wilson v. Garcia*, 471 U.S. 261, 276 (1985); *Dique v. N.J. State Police*, 603 F.3d 181, 185 (3d Cir. 2010). The accrual date of a § 1983 action is determined by federal law, however. *Wallace v. Kato*, 549 U.S. 384, 388 (2007); *Montanez v. Sec'y Pa. Dep't of Corr.*, 773 F.3d 472, 480 (3d Cir. 2014). "Under federal law, a cause of action accrues when the plaintiff knew or should have known of the injury upon which the action is based." *Montanez*, 773 F.3d at 480 (internal quotation marks omitted).

Plaintiff alleges that the events giving rise to claims in the Complaint occurred: "April 2007 through February 2009, all day, every day." Complaint § III(B). The allegedly unconstitutional conditions of confinement would have been immediately apparent to Plaintiff at the time of detention. Accordingly, the statute of limitations for Plaintiff's claims expired in February 2011. As there are no grounds for equitable tolling of the statute of limitations,³ the Complaint will be

² "Although the running of the statute of limitations is ordinarily an affirmative defense, where that defense is obvious from the face of the complaint and no development of the record is necessary, a court may dismiss a time-barred complaint sua sponte under § 28 U.S.C. § 1915(e)(2)(B)(ii) for failure to state a claim." *Ostuni v. Wa Wa's Mart*, 532 F. App'x 110, 111-12 (3d Cir. 2013) (per curiam).

³ Equitable tolling "is only appropriate '(1) where the defendant has actively misled the plaintiff respecting the plaintiff's cause of action; (2) where the plaintiff in some extraordinary way has been prevented from asserting his or her rights; or (3) where the plaintiff has timely asserted his or her rights

dismissed with prejudice. *Ostuni v. Wa Wa's Mart*, 532 F. App'x 110, 112 (3d Cir. 2013) (per curiam) (affirming dismissal with prejudice due to expiration of statute of limitations).

For the reasons stated above, the Complaint is dismissed with prejudice for failure to state a claim.

An appropriate order follows.

February 14, 2017

Date

s/ Jerome B. Simandle

JEROME B. SIMANDLE

Chief U.S. District Judge

mistakenly in the wrong forum.'" *Omar v. Blackman*, 590 F. App'x 162, 166 (3d Cir. 2014) (quoting *Santos ex rel. Beato v. United States*, 559 F.3d 189, 197 (3d Cir. 2009)).